

TEACHING READING BY USING COOPERATIVE INTEGRATED READING AND COMPOSITION

By
Irwan Doni¹
Zulfadli A. Aziz
Siti Sarah Fitriani

Syiah Kuala University, Banda Aceh

ABSTRACT

This experimental study was done with the third-semester, Grade 11, Accounting students at SMKN 3 in Lhokseumawe to investigate differences in reading comprehension learning ability between students who were taught reading, using the Cooperative Integrated Reading and Writing Techniques (CIRC) and those who were taught using the Grammar Translation Method. This study also aimed to find out the students' perceptions toward the use of the CIRC technique for teaching-learning reading comprehension. Two classes were selected as the research sample, an experimental class (EG) and a control class (CG). Each class had 22 students so the total sample was 44 students. The research data was obtained through tests (i.e. a pre-test and a post-test) and a questionnaire with the EG. SPSS version 17 was used to analyze the data. The results showed that the mean score of the EG in the post-test at 81 was significantly higher than that of the CG at 72. The value of significance for the EG and the CG in the post-test was 0.031, lower than $\alpha = 0.05$. Hence H_a was accepted, indicating that there was a significant difference in reading comprehension ability between the students taught by using the CIRC technique and those taught by using the Grammar Translation Method. Therefore, it can be concluded that teaching reading comprehension using the CIRC technique is more effective than by using the Grammar Translation Method.

Keywords: *Teaching Reading, Reading Comprehension, CIRC Technique*

¹ Corresponding author: irwandoni76@gmail.com

INTRODUCTION

English is one of the compulsory subjects, which is taught-learned in junior and senior high schools including vocational high schools in Indonesia. Speaking, listening, writing and reading are the four skills that the students have to master. All of these skills are usually used for communication. One of the English skills learned at a vocational high school is reading comprehension, which aims to teach students how to find detailed information, vocabulary, the main idea, references, and inferences. Reading is one of the ways for students to obtain knowledge and information provided in books, magazines, and articles. Therefore, students' ability in reading comprehension is very important. Reading comprehension helps students understand information clearly in a text they read, so that they can answer questions related to the text correctly.

According to the 2013 Curriculum for Vocational High School (SMK), students are expected to be able to capture the meaning of descriptive texts, orally and written. Descriptive texts provide descriptions, for example about people, tourist attractions and famous historical buildings, machinery, means of transport and many others.

The expectations in the 2013 Curriculum for learning reading comprehension were not reached by the sample students. They could still not understand reading texts well, and they could not answer questions related to the reading texts given in their textbooks.

In addition, the reality in the school also showed that most of the students had low ability in reading, so that they were unable to achieve the minimum standard criteria (KKM) according to the data obtained by the researcher from an interview with the teacher of English in Class XI. The academic report showed that only 50% of the students had reached the minimum standard criteria (70) or higher, while the average score achieved by the students was 60. Moreover, based on the results from reading tests given by the teacher the students were still lacking in all reading sub-skills, viz: vocabulary, main idea, finding references, making inferences, and finding details.

Failure to achieve the objectives of the 2013 Curriculum was due to several causes. The first problem was lack of vocabulary that caused the students to have difficulty in comprehending the content of the text and capturing specific information and details. In fact, the teacher did not teach vocabulary in detail, he only taught vocabulary from the

textbook; then the students were asked to answer questions from the textbook. According to Schmitt (2000), students need to know approximately 2,000 words to be able to communicate in an everyday situation using a foreign language. The second problem was lack of knowledge of how to find the main idea and references, how to make inferences and how to identify details. The third problem was the use of an inappropriate strategy by the teacher for teaching-learning reading comprehension that made the students get easily bored when asked to read. The teacher dominated the teaching-learning processes and the students were not actively involved in the learning processes. Moreover, they learned reading comprehension individually not in a group by translating the reading texts. The fourth problem was that the motivation of the students for learning reading comprehension was still low. This was because the students believed that English was a very difficult subject to understand.

Due to these problems, the researcher felt that applying the Cooperative Integrated Reading and Composition (CIRC) technique for teaching-learning reading comprehension at SMKN 3 Lhokseumawe could get better results. By applying the CIRC technique, the students would learn how to understand more vocabulary plus how to find the main idea; also they will learn how to identify references, inferences and details; and they will be more motivated when studying reading comprehension. This is because this technique requires students to study in groups. The CIRC technique is one of the teaching-learning techniques based on co-operation which has been designed to develop reading and the other language skills in the upper grades of primary education. It provides a structure that not only increases opportunities for direct teaching-learning in reading and writing but also for the application of composition writing techniques.

Research Questions

1. Will there be any significant difference in reading comprehension ability between students who are taught reading by using the Cooperative Integrated Reading and Composition (CIRC) technique and those who are taught by using the traditional Grammar Translation Method?
2. What will be the perceptions of the students to the use of the Cooperative Integrated Reading and Composition (CIRC) technique for teaching-learning reading comprehension?

Research Objectives

1. To find out if there will be any significant difference in the reading comprehension ability of Class XI Accounting students at SMK 3, Lhokseumawe taught-learning reading comprehension using the Co-operative Integrated Reading and Composition (CIRC) Technique and those who are taught by means of the Grammar Translation Method.
2. To find out the perceptions of the Experimental Group of those students to the use of Cooperative Integrated Reading and Composition (CIRC) technique for teaching-learning reading comprehension to them.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Reading

One way to get information is by reading. Reading is a process of understanding symbols which are translated into meaning in order to get meaning and messages from a text. According to Cline et al. (2006, p. 2), reading is analyzing and understanding text in written form. In line with the above theory, according to Somadayo (2011, p. 4), reading is an interactive activity to understand the meanings contained in written material.

Teaching Reading

It is one of the tasks of the EFL teacher to develop the ability of her students in reading comprehension, to help them get better at reading and to enjoy reading more, the teacher should know various strategies and methods to use in teaching. Furthermore, according to Farris, Fuhler & Walther (2004), teachers should know the needs of students in learning, understand various methods of teaching-learning and how to apply them to students. There are many activities in teaching-learning reading that can be applied in the classroom, such as group discussion, reading aloud, questioning the strategy, and lastly the Cooperative Integrated Reading and Composition Technique, (CIRCT) which the researcher chose to use in this study for teaching-learning reading comprehension.

Reading Comprehension

Reading comprehension is defined as understanding the messages in a text/message. This understanding occurs because of the correlation

between the written words and the understanding of knowledge outside of the text. . In accord with Klinger (2007, p. 2), reading comprehension is the process of meaning formation by coordinating a number of complex processes that include reading words, knowledge about words ie. vocabulary and fluency. In line with Klinger, Grellet (2010, p. 3) has said that reading comprehension is when a reader endeavours to understand a written text by searching for the core meaning that requires getting information from it as efficiently as possible. In other words, reading comprehension is not just the activity of reading the text but it also uses skills so that the message, ie. the information conveyed by the writer can be understood well by the reader. According to Laila (2009, p. 11), comprehension takes place while a person is reading and it needs a set of skills that enable him to find the information he needs and to understand it in terms of what he already knows.

Co-operative Integrated Reading and Composition (CIRC)

One of the Co-operative Learning techniques is the Co-operative Integrated Reading and Composition (CIRC) method which is a reading and writing program for students, that consists of three principal elements: (i) story-related activities, (ii) direct instruction in reading comprehension and (iii) integrated language writing. In the CIRC method, students have the opportunity to practice comprehension and reading skills in pairs and/or small groups. Students are put into small groups where they read to each other, predict how stories will end, summarize stories and then write responses to questions posed by the teacher, and also practice spelling. Students work to understand the main idea of a story and work through writing activities. According to Slavin & Madden (1996), CIRC is a comprehensive reading and writing program that includes story-related activities, direct instruction in reading comprehension, and integrated reading and language arts. In this study, CIRC is a teaching-learning technique which can be used to improve students' ability in composing narrative writing in order to make classroom situations more interesting.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Research Design

This is a quasi-experimental study designed to find any differences in students' achievements in reading comprehension by using the CIRC method compared to using the Grammar Translation Method with second grade, Accounting students at SMKN 3 Lhokseumawe. The researcher used an experimental design with, an experimental group (EG) and a control group (CG) with a pre-test and a post-test after the treatment.

Research Instruments

To collect the data for this study, the researcher used tests, a pre-test and a post-test and a questionnaire with the EG. The tests were given to measure the ability of the students in reading comprehension before and after the treatments. The questionnaire was used to find out the perspectives of the EG students to the use of the CIRC method for teaching-learning reading comprehension.

Data Collection

The study was done in the third semester in the academic year 2016-17. The main techniques used for collecting the data were the pre-test and the post-test. A pre-test and a post test were given to both the EG and the CG. After the treatment and the post-test, the researcher distributed a questionnaire to the EG.

Data Analysis

This study used quantitative analysis to find out if the CIRC technique improved the reading comprehension of the EG students more than the standard technique used with the CG students. The data was analyzed statistically using SPSS version 17.

The post-test results of the EG and the CG were compared by using a t-test to prove the hypothesis. In this case, the degree of significance $\alpha = 0.05$. As $\sigma/p < 0.05$, H_a was accepted so it was concluded that there was a significant improvement in the reading comprehension scores between the students who were taught by using the CIRC technique and those who were not.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

The results showed that the post-test reading comprehension scores of the EG were better after the use of the CIRC Method compared to those of the control class taught by using the Grammar Translation Method.

The results from the pre-tests and post-tests of the student's comprehension towards the aspects of reading comprehension, namely vocabulary, the main idea, inferences, references, and details shows that the students of both classes were able to comprehend vocabulary, the main idea, inferences, references, and details in the descriptive text used in the tests.

The first discussion concerns the improvement of the students after being taught reading by implementing the CIRC technique. The first hypothesis test indicated that there was a significant positive difference in the students' achievement between those students who were taught by using the CIRC Method and those who were taught by using the Grammar Translation Method for learning reading comprehension, where the value of significance was 0.031 which was lower than $\alpha = 0.05$. This indicated that teaching reading by using the CIRC Method was more effective than teaching reading by using the Grammar Translation Method.

The second discussion is about the questionnaire completed by the EG students at the end of the last meeting which had 10 statements related to the use of the CIRC technique in the class with a Likert scale, viz: strongly agree, agree, disagree, and strongly disagree: The results from the questionnaire indicated positive responses which showed that the students responded positively to the use of the CIRC technique for teaching-learning reading comprehension.

CONCLUSIONS AND SUGGESTIONS

Conclusions

The research findings showed that teaching-learning using the CIRC technique improved the reading comprehension ability of the EG students significantly more than the improvement in the CG using the Grammar Translation method.

In addition, the EG students responded positively to the use of the CIRC technique for teaching-learning reading comprehension. The questionnaire findings indicated that the EG students were better able

to understand EFL reading comprehension after using the CIRC technique.

Suggestions

The research findings showed that the CIRC technique can be an optional technique for improving the EFL reading comprehension ability of students. The researcher would like to offer some suggestions to English teachers, students, SMKN3 Lhokseumawe and other EFL researchers. There are several things that English teachers need to do to reach their targets when teaching-learning reading comprehension using the CIRC technique. The first thing is that teachers should motivate all their students in every classroom meeting by explaining the importance of EFL reading comprehension to their students. The second thing is that teachers have to ensure that their students are in heterogeneous groups, mixing more proficient and weaker students together. The teachers should only act as facilitators, and so they should always go to each group to monitor and control their students so that all students are working together and no group is dominated by a too smart student. For students who are weak, the teacher can encourage them to contribute by giving them ideas during the group work. In order for all group members to play an active role in each task, the teacher can ask students who are not very active to present their group work results in front of the class.

It is expected that teachers will give rewards to those students who often have good ideas and do their group tasks well by giving applause and praise, so that students are more motivated in their learning. It is also expected that this research can be used as a reference for further research in this field. It is also suggested that SMKN3 Lhokseumawe give more attention to reading comprehension for students who have difficulty comprehending English texts. It is suggested that the teachers in the school use some of the Co-operative Learning techniques including the CIRC technique in their teaching-learning for EFL reading comprehension. Finally, for other researchers, it is also expected that this research will be able to be used as a foundation when conducting their research toward other English skills such as writing, listening and speaking.

The last suggestion is for the education board. It is suggested that the education board should give more training to English teachers, especially for teaching reading comprehension.

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